

## ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

### Chapter 4: Jñāna-Karma-Sannyāsa-Yoga

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**The moment where one is no longer attached to the results of action, one is free from karmic reactions and is on the path to attain liberation**

The 4th Chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā is called **Gyana Karma SaṁnyāsaYoga** or **the Yoga of Knowledge and the Disciplines of Action**.

The session started with the traditional lighting of the lamp.

Śrī Krishna reminds Arjuna that what he is saying on the battlefield is nothing new and that the knowledge has come down since time immemorial. It was imparted by HIM to Vivasvat or the sun deity (Suryadev) and the same knowledge has then been passed down in a continuous tradition, till the current date. Bhagavān then touches upon the concept of Karma where HE highlights the differentiation between an Avatar Purush from other embodied souls. Bhagavān mentions that an embodied soul is bounded to the cycle of life and death due to karmic reactions (positive or negative) whereas the avatar (Say Śrī Krishna) is free from the cycle of life and death and is unaffected by the laws of Karma.

Bhagavān then explains that by being free from attachment, fear, and anger, by becoming fully absorbed in HIM, and taking refuge in HIM, many persons in the past became purified by knowledge of HIM, and thus attained HIS divine love (as stated in the below shloka).

**वीतरागभयक्रोधा मन्मया मामुपाश्रिताः |**

**बहवो ज्ञानतपसा पूता मद्भावमागताः || 10||**

Those who unconditionally surrenders to HIM will attain HIM. Those who have attained this state would experience "Sat Chit ananda" or eternal bliss and this state is unchangeable. One would be firmly seated in HIM in this elevated state of consciousness.

Now, one would contemplate or wonder if such elevated states are achievable for an embodied soul. The ultimate goal is to seek liberation, which ultimately frees one from all kinds of distress and

misery. However, one's devotion and faith tend to fall apart in situations of pain, misery or distress. Saint Tukaram Maharaj had achieved this state of happiness and bliss.

For most people, the problems compound into sorrows which hampers the devotion whereas Saint Tukaram Maharaj remained unaffected even when struck by the most distressing situations in his life. Although he was rich and gave up all his wealth in charity, he lost his wife to starvation and his elder son to a pandemic. However, the external situation could not change his internal state of happiness and bliss (Sat Chit ananda).

For the majority of the population, the concept of devotion is a give-and-take policy with the divine. One always looks forward to having the fruits of devotion or Karma. If the results are not in one's own favor, one is easily dejected and questions the act of devotion. To achieve the elevated states of happiness and bliss, one needs to engage in pious devotion and karma, which is elaborately explained in this chapter. Bhagavān also explains that for those who attain HIM, how or in which form would they attain the Divine which is explained in the forthcoming shlokas.

#### 4.11

**ye yathā māṃ prapadyante, tāṃstathaiva bhajāmyaham,  
mama vartmānuvartante, manuṣyāḥ(ph) pārtha sarvaśaḥ. 4.11**

Arjuna, howsoever men seek Me, even so do I respond to them; for all men follow My path in every way.

this shloka, Bhagavān says that in whatever way devotees surrender unto HIM, HE shall reciprocate accordingly. Let's understand the various path or sentiments which which one could surrender to the Divine with the few examples stated below.

When Ramakrishna Paramahansa engaged in the worship of Devi Kali as his mother, she actually became his mother. In whatever form and path a devotee worships Bhagavān, HE reciprocates accordingly in the same way. When Arjuna regarded Bhagavān as his best friend (Sakha), Bhagavān reciprocated with the same sentiments, and HE even became Arjuna's charioteer. Hanuman Ji perceived Bhagavān Śrī Ram as his master. Every action of his was completely devoted to Bhagavān Śrī Ram the divine reciprocated accordingly. Uddhav Ji was a seeker for knowledge and Bhagavān Śrī Krishna granted to him accordingly. The Gopis had madhurya bhaav towards

Bhagavān Śrī Krishna and he reciprocated accordingly. The term Vartma refers to 'path' and Bhagavān explains that HE reciprocates with everyone in the same that by which they surrender to HIM.

#### 4.12

**kāṅkṣantaḥ(kh) karmaṇām(m) siddhiṃ(m), yajanta iha devatāḥ,  
kṣipraṃ(m) hi mānuṣe loke, siddhirbhavati karmajā. 4.12**

In this world of human beings, men seeking the fruition of their activities, worship the gods; for success born of actions follows quickly

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains that in this material world, those desiring success in material activities worship the celestial gods, since material rewards manifest quickly.

Some seekers pray to Devi Lakshmi with devotion for acquiring wealth in the material world. Similarly, one engages in the worship of Bhagavān Ganesh for intellect, Devi Durga for valor, so on and so forth. Those who seek worldly desires worship the celestial devatas and might seek boons from them very quickly. While we are often advised not to have desires, this is very difficult for not all cannot be Sant Tukaram. We do need wealth for education etc. Therefore we do pray to such deities for help and blessings. It is justified to worshiping to the celestial deities to have the desires of the material realm fulfilled.

Even Bhagavān Rama had worshipped the Surya Dev for three days seeking success in the war as advised by Agastya Muni, as the pooja was essential to emerge victorious in the battle. While worshipping Śrī Ram recited the Aditya Hridayam Stotra taught by Agastya Maha Muni. This stotra dedicated to Surya Dev is one of the most potent hymns that one can recite in times of need. Aditya Hridayam Stotra was taught to Śrī Rama because meditation on Surya Dev provides clarity and energy to deal with difficulties ahead. This stotra echoes the knowledge about Surya Dev and how he functions tirelessly as an instrument of Supreme Power.

Sri Krishna had advised Arjuna to pray to Durga Devi for victory before the war of Mahabharata. In brief, such worship to other deities is necessary. For instance, a student should worship or bow down to Śrī Ganesh, Saraswati Mata to enable them to use the intellect and perform actions to attain their goals. by bowing down to these deities, the results are faster. The celestial devatas grant boons only by the powers bestowed upon them by the Supreme Divine.

Another way to look at it is via the example of how we look into various departments of the government for solving various issues. If unresolved by local departments, then the matter escalates to higher levels. One does not write letters directly to the Prime Minister for issues related to electricity. Thus, for success in our siddhis, we reach out to the respective celestial deities, for quick fulfilment. One should bear in mind that the daily worship to the deities at home, offering bhog is not to be undermined with an attitude of giving a sermon that what's the need for such practices when HE is all-pervading. All such acts have their own importance as per scriptures and even in Bhagavad gītā, Bhagavān Śrī Krishna never undermines this form of worship. HE says one would get the fruits of his actions through this form of worship too.

#### 4.13

### **cāturvarṇyaṃ(m) mayā sṛṣṭaṃ(ñ), guṇakarmavibhāgaśaḥ, tasya kartāRāmapi māṃ(m), viddhyakartāRāmavyayam. 4.13**

The four orders of society (viz., the Brāhmana, the Kṣatriya, the Vaiśya and the śūdra) were created by Me, classifying them according to the Guṇas predominant in each and apportioning corresponding duties to them; though the originator of this creation, know Me, the Immortal Lord, to be a non-doer.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains that the four categories or folds of occupations were created by HIM according to people's qualities and activities. HE also mentions that although HE is the creator of this system, HE is the eternal, the Non-doer.

The four folds of occupations explained here have been highly misunderstood. Bhagavān says that based on karma and duties, society is divided into four parts.

- **the Brāhmana,**
- **the Kṣatriya,**
- **the Vaiśya and**
- **the śūdra**

The term "guna" (mode of nature) are of three types and is categorised as - sattva (mode of goodness), rajas (mode of passion) and tamas (mode of ignorance). Sattva is driven by knowledge and those who are seekers of knowledge fall into the category of the Brahmāna. The ones who are rajas oriented are Kṣatriyas (those who protect or work with weapons) or Vaishya (business oriented). The entire caste system has been misunderstood as it is a misconception that "śūdra" is of a lower caste.

The correct pronunciation is "śūdra" and not "kshoodra" which has caused the misunderstanding for decades. Those in service class, including engineers, doctors and other, are called "śūdra." All this has been created for the better meant of society. Interestingly, these division for labour is seen everywhere in this material world. This is true even in a family, where duties are allotted based on their needs and capabilities (students, those who earn and handle the financial stability of the family, those who cook or homemakers and so on).

Even if one were to look at an organization, one would see categorization. There is a different department that looks at different affairs as per the designated roles. Like finance, Human Resource, Planning and Implementation, Technical, Security, so on and so forth. Categorization is needed for smooth functioning of entire process also because one class alone cannot take care of multiple specialized duties without creating a chaos.

Our Vedas are the only one's that have put in such a perfect system for the betterment of the society and its smooth functioning. Because of this system one can see the organised functioning of the society rather than chaos. Any disturbance in this structure that's visible today is because of the lack of insight in understanding the system and breeding wrong notions.

Bhagavān then says that HE is the non-doer, although HE has categorised the society into four divisions, which might sound a little confusing. This classification was according to people's qualities and activities. Based on the Karmas of current birth decides the destiny or the fate of the soul in the next birth. The next birth is based on our past actions, present deeds our future takes shape. Bhagavān has no role to play in that as HE has given the intellect to use wisely, which one can by proper balancing of the gunas and proper deeds. HE is not the influencer of any of these that unfold based on one's own Karma and hence HE is the non-doer.

#### 4.14

**na māṃ(ñ) karmāṇi limpanti, na me karmaphale sprhā,  
iti māṃ(m) yo'bhijānāti, karmabhirna sa badhyate. 4.14**

Since I have no craving for the fruit of actions, actions do not taint Me. Even he who thus knows Me in reality is not bound by actions.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains that actions do not taint HIM, nor does HE desire the fruits of action. One who knows HIM in this way is never bound by the karmic reactions of work. HE is free from attachment towards the fruits of all actions. HE is transcendental to the fruitive reactions of work.

The embodied soul can draw inspiration from HIM in order to be free from the karmic reactions. Karma or actions bind one in karmic reactions when they are performed with the mindset of enjoying the results. However, when one performs actions with a sense of non-doer ship and gives up desires on the results of actions, one is free from the karmic reactions. One needs to be immune towards the results of the actions.

## 4.15

### **evaṃ(ñ) jñātvā kṛtaṃ(ñ) karma, pūrvairapi mumukṣubhiḥ, kuru karmaiva tasmāttvaṃ(m), pūrvaiḥ(ph) pūrvataraṃ(ñ) kṛtam. 4.15**

Having known thus, action was performed even by the ancient seekers for liberation; therefore, do you also perform actions as have been performed by the ancients from antiquity.

In this shloka, Bhagavān mentions that by knowing this truth, even seekers of liberation in ancient times performed actions. HE advises to Arjuna that by following the footsteps of those ancient sages, Arjuna should perform his duty.

Let's understand this with few examples. Bhagavān Śrī Krishna had fought approximately 16 battles and had emerged victorious. HE fought for righteousness and not with any selfish motive. Upon winning the battle, HE did not take over as the king of the land, but instead crowned a virtuous soul as the king. The killing of Kamsa and the subsequent crowning of Kamsa's father showed that Bhagavān was not interested in the kingdom or towards the fruits of HIS actions.

Similarly, in the Ramayan, Bhagavān Śrī Ram slayed Bali during the war over Kishkinda and HE then crowns Angad as the king of the land. When Bhagavān Śrī Ram slayed Ravana, he crowned Vibhishan as the king of Lanka. From these illustrations from the life of the avatars, the supreme almighty discharged HIS duties or actions without any attachment or desire on the fruits of the actions.

This illustrates the point that one should not be attached to the fruits of action. These inferences have been subsequently arrived at by wise people and ancient sages who were the seekers of liberation. Great sages like Vishwamitra, Vashistha, etc., have followed the footsteps of Bhagavān by relinquishing the attachment and desire towards the results of all actions. Even kings like Janak have imbibed this quality by discharging the duties of a king. By following their footsteps of these ancient sages, one would be able to give up attachment towards the fruits of actions. The moment where one is no longer attached to the results, one is free from karmic reactions and is on the path to attain liberation.

## 4.16

### **kiṃ(ñ) karma kimakarmeti, kavayo'pyatra mohitāḥ, tatte karma praVākṣyāmi, yajñātvā mokṣyase'śubhāt. 4.16**

What is action and what is inaction? Even men of intelligence are puzzled over this question. Therefore, I shall expound to you the truth about action, knowing which you will be freed from its evil effects i.e., the shackles of karma.

This is a very difficult and important shloka. Bhagavān continues to explain on what is action, and what is inaction. HE says that even the wise are confused in determining this. Bhagavān says that by knowing the difference, one will be liberated from the material world. All this comes about because Arjuna has started feeling that his imminent action would cause problems later. Bhagavān says that this action is because Arjuna is unclear about the difference between these two concepts.

Bhagavān says that even the highly wise and learned ones are deluded and are unable to determine what is action and what is inaction. Arjuna is of the opinion that his karma would bring about mass death of his clan on the war field, which is not pious, which would bring about impurity in future, which has been explained in Chapter 1. Arjuna was confused about his action as the understanding of action and inaction was unknown to him. Bhagavān now mentions that he shall now reveal to him the

differentiation between action and inaction through which one will be free from material bondage, thoughts about impurities or anything that is not pious.

#### 4.17

### **karmaṇo hyapi boddhavyaṃ(m), boddhavyaṃ(ñ) ca vikarmaṇaḥ, akarmaṇas̄ca boddhavyaṃ(ñ), gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ. 4.17**

The truth about action must be known and the truth of inaction also must be known; even so, the truth about prohibited action (Vikarma) must be known. For, mysterious are the ways of action.

Bhagavān explains the nature of all three recommended - action, wrong action, and inaction. The truth about these is profound and difficult to understand.

The term "Boddhavyam" refers to anything that should be known or anything that is vital to be known. Below are the nature of the three categories of action:

- 1. **Karma** - These are prescribed duties done by the means of the physical body.
- 2. **Vikarma** - Translates to actions which should not be done or unusual and rare actions.
- 3. **Akarmana** - Actions that are eventually discharged automatically.

Some actions require conscious effort. Say, someone learning to ride a bicycle. They learn the art of balancing automatically. Let's say a homemaker is engaged in cooking. Although the action is being performed, it is happening automatically. Even those action is happening, there is no conscious knowledge that action is taking place. Another perfect example would be that of swimming, where there is action and no conscious knowledge about the action being performed.

The children are expected to engage in studies. If the children are speaking to watch other and the teacher enters the class, the children engage in studies automatically. In this scenario, although the teacher is not directly responsible for engaging the children in studying, just by the presence of the teacher, the act of engaging in studies happen automatically. Similarly, the presence of a boss makes people work. Like how the entire world starts to engage in activities and actions with the Sun rise, Akarma happens automatically in the presence of the Divine. This is "akarmana".

#### 4.18

### **karmaṇyakarma yaḥ(ph) paśyed, akarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ, sa buddhimānmanuṣyeṣu, sa yuktaḥ(kh) kṛtsnakarmakṛt. 4.18**

He who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction, is wise among men; he is a Yogī, who has performed all actions.

In this shloka, Bhagavān says that those wise persons who see action in inaction; and inaction in action are truly wise amongst humans. Although performing all kinds of actions, they are yogis and masters of all their actions.

Let's understand the concept of seeing inaction in action. Consider the example of the boss entering the office. Just by the presence of a boss, the persons in an office start working. Or, just by the presence of Swamy Ji, the classes of Gītā are running and the knowledge is being imparted. This is an example of seeing inaction in action.

However, seeing action in inaction is a little difficult. Swamiji says that this is a very high-level state. By just meditating, one can take the mind on a pilgrimage. This thought is an action of the highest

order, the most pious form of action. Although one is unable to visit the temple premises physically, one can still worship the same temple with the power of contemplation and devotion (Manas pooja). This is the karma of highest order. There are three types as stated below by Swamy Ji:

- 1. **Dhanaja** - getting task done by donating money or engaging in charity.
- 2. **Tanuja** - By personally engaging in the task.
- 3. **Manasaja** - By executing the Sādhanā by meditating upon the same.

Once a wealthy merchant went to Saint Tukaram and mentioned that he wanted to be like Saint Tukaram. The wealthy man did not want to pay anyone for the puja. Tukaram Maharaj taught him manas puja, which is a powerful tool to attain the divine with utmost devotion, without a penny being spent. Based on the power of Manas Puja, Saint Tukaram had a darshan of Vittal Bhagavān. The wealthy man started to engage in Manas Pooja with full dedication and he would offer delicacies, flowers or fruits to the divine in his mind. One day, during the Manas pooja, he offered Kheer to Vittal Bhagavān. In the flow of thoughts, he wondered if the kheer had sugar and was about to put in more sugar into the kheer. He again remembered that he had already put sugar into the kheer and was about to take his hand back. In this process, Vittal Bhagavān held his hand and gave him the darshan. This is the power of Manas pooja, when done from a state of extreme and sincere devotion. One who masters this karma (action) and akarma (inaction) is the master of all actions and truly wise amongst humans.

#### 4.19

**yasya sarve samārambhāḥ(kh), kāmasaṅkalpavarjitāḥ,  
jñānāgnidagdhakarmāṇaṃ(n), tamāhuḥ(ph) paṇḍitaṃ(m) budhāḥ. 4.19**

Even the wise call him a sage, whose undertakings are all free from desire and Sankalpa (thoughts of the world) and whose actions are burnt up by the fire of wisdom.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains that the enlightened sages call those persons wise, whose every action is free from the desire for material pleasures and who have burnt the reactions of work in the fire of divine knowledge. The sense of liking and the resultant action is the root of the issue.

Let's understand the difference between Kama (desire) and Sankalpa (resolution). Consider the example of a saree. If one puts in appreciation - say a beautiful saree, the next thought that follows is a desire of wanting the saree. When a person undertakes an action which is under the influence of desire and motive (resolution), the action is motive based. If the action is free from desire and motive, the existence of action is not nullified.

Consider the example of mango tree. Upon sowing the seed, it grows into a tree with time. If the seed is roasted, the seed would not grow into a fruit bearing tree. Similarly, any action roasted in knowledge will not result in creation of karma. This is what it means when we say the "fire of wisdom". The existence of action is nullified. Knowledge based actions would not have any karmic reactions and such persons are considered to be pundits or the learned one by the wise persons. A pundit is the one who has the knowledge of atma jnana (knowledge of the self) and becomes respectable to wise persons too.

The session ends with prayer and Hanuman Chalisa.

#### Question and Answer

## Prāṇa Krushna Sahu Ji

**Question:** What is the meaning of kṛitsna-karma-kṛit in shloka 18?

**Answer:** It means total or complete. In this context, HE is the Doer of all actions.

## Ghanshyam Ji

**Question:** What is the meaning of Avyayum?

**Answer:** Anything is not perishable, that which is eternal.

**Question:** What is the meaning of viddhyakartāram avyayam in shloka 13?

**Answer:** Bhagavān says that HE remains a non-doer of action, although HE has created the entire system.

**Question:** Why dint the Divine slay Asuri Pravitti?

**Answer:** There was no time without evil people and no time existed without good people. The good and evil gunas would always prevail. Even in current times, if one gets a promotion, the evil sets into the other in the form of negative states such as jealousy. One transits between saintly trait or demoniac trait like a pendulum. In the last incarnation, Bhagavān has given the knowledge of the traits of saintly and demoniac people in Gītā, so that one could control these traits. The purpose of the Śrī Krishna was to impart the Gītā to help one and all to live a fruitful life.

## Trilok Pandey

**Question:** Seeing action in inaction and inaction in action. How can we see the different kinds of bhakti in this?

**Answer:** It may not be sensible to mix up these concepts. There are 4 categories of devotees. The one who seeks wealth (Artharthi) does not believe in Akarma. A jigyasu would try to see Akarma in the Karma. A Gyani would be able to see both (action in inaction; inaction in action).

## Manoranjan Biswal

**Question:** In Shlok 18 - Akarma - Kindly explain

**Answer:** Action is happening instinctively after a habit is formed. An example might be of changing gears instinctively. Or a person balancing on a cycle. In this case, karma transforms to Akarma (action to inaction). Say driving a car, one is automatically changing the gear unconsciously. Whereas, any action performed by means of the physical body is Karma. The Karma turns into Akarma with more and more practice.

## Udaya Ji

**Question:** How to free oneself from Rajo and Tamo guna and purify the mind?

**Answer:** One cannot free oneself from any of the three gunas and also the three gunas are essential. When a car is running, it would also need the brakes. This brake represents the Tamo guna. The sattva guna (engine), Rajo guna (wheels) and Tamo guna (brakes) are important. However, one needs to ensure that the Tamo Guna does not override the Rajo guna or Sattva guna. During the night, one needs to rest (active tamo guna) and remain active during the day (active Rajo guna). Hence, one needs to learn to strike a balance between the gunas. All actions should be driven by Sattva guna, this can be brought into daily life with constant practice.

## Shirod Ji

**Question:** Shloka 13, kindly explain.

**Answer:** From an eternal period, HE (Bhagavān Śrī Krishna) have created the system. But at the same time, HE is the eternal non-doer of the system. The system runs on its own and the next birth is decided based on one's karma, which is independent of the Supreme Divine. Hence, HE is the non-doer eternally.

**Question:** What is Vikarma?

**Answer:** Prohibited action which should not be done.



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### **Jai Shri Krishna!**

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar - Creative Writing Department

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